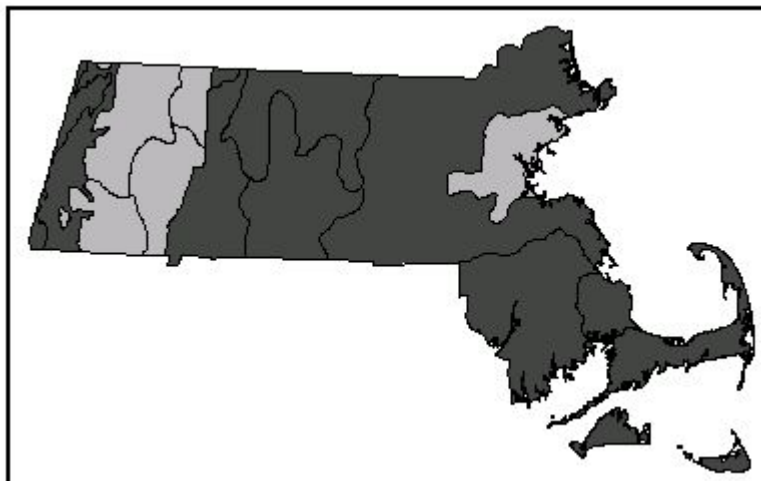


**Community Name:** SHRUB SWAMP  
**Community ELCODE:** CP2A0C0000  
**SRANK:** S5



**Concept:** Shrub-dominated wetlands occurring on mineral or mucky mineral soils that are seasonally or temporarily flooded.

**Environmental setting:** Shrub swamps are common and widespread. They occur in basin depressions, at pond margins, and along river and streamsides. They can be found in any flat area where the water table is at or above the soil surface for most of the year. Soils are generally well-decomposed organic mucks that are permanently saturated but only seasonally or temporarily inundated. Shrub swamps are often found in the transition zone between emergent marshes and swamp forests. More information is needed on their physical characteristics.

**Vegetation Description:** Shrub swamps are highly variable communities that probably can be divided into several types; however, there is currently not enough information available to separate vegetation types. Shrub swamps typically have a mixture of the following shrub species: speckled alder (*Alnus incana* ssp. *rugosa*), smooth alder (*Alnus serrulata*), highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba* var. *latifolia*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), swamp azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*), silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), northern arrow-wood (*Viburnum dentatum* var. *lucidum*), maleberry (*Lyonia ligustrina*), and the non-native shrub European alder-buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*). Scattered red maple (*Acer rubrum*) or gray birch (*Betula populifolia*) saplings also occur. Richer shrub swamps in areas with circumneutral water are often dominated by spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*). Some shrub swamps are dominated by a single species, such as black willow (*Salix nigra*) riverside thickets [which may best be included with floodplain forests], highbush blueberry thickets, or buttonbush swamps. Highbush blueberry thickets that occur on peat are described separately in the peatlands section; with more data, other types may also be split off and described as distinct community types. Since shrubs often form dense thickets, the herbaceous layer of shrub swamps is often sparse and species-poor. A mixture of the following species is typical: common arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia* var. *latifolia*), skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), and royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), and Sphagnum spp. moss. More inventory work is needed.

**Associations:** No associations have been described in Massachusetts.

**Habitat values for Associated Fauna:** Shrub swamps often function as vernal pool habitat in sections that have extended periods of ponding (2-3 months) and lack fish; these sections provide important amphibian breeding habitat.

**Associated rare plants:**

BIDENS DISCOIDEA	SMALL BEGGAR-TICKS	- WL
SALIX PEDICELLARIS	BOG-WILLOW	- WL

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**Associated rare animals:**

AMBYSTOMA JEFFERSONIANUM	JEFFERSON SALAMANDER	SC
AMBYSTOMA LATERALE	BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER	SC
AMBYSTOMA OPACUM	MARbled SALAMANDER	T
CLEMMYS GUTTATA	SPOTTED TURTLE	SC
CLEMMYS INSCULPTA	WOOD TURTLE	SC
DESMOCERUS PALLIATUS	ELDERBERRY LONG-HORNED BEETLE	SC
EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII	BLANDING'S TURTLE	T
HEMIDACTYLUM SCUTATUM	FOUR-TOED SALAMANDER	SC
PAPAPEMA SULPHURATA	WATER-WILLOW STEM BORER	T
SCAPHIOPUS HOLBROOKII	EASTERN SPADEFOOT	T
SYNURELLA CHAMBERLAINI	COASTAL SWAMP AMPHIPOD	SC

**Examples with Public Access:** parts of 1000 Acre Swamp, Athol and Phillipston.

**Threats:** Invasion by purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

**Management needs:** More information is needed to assess the management needs of shrub swamps.

**Synonyms USNVC/TNC:** Salix nigra flooded shrubland [CEGL003901]; Alnus incana swamp shrubland [CEGL002381]; Alnus serrulata eastern shrubland [CEGL005082]; Cephalanthus occidentalis semipermanently flooded shrubland [CEGL003908]; Decodon verticillatus semipermanently flooded shrubland [CEGL005089].

**MA [old name]:** Not described separately.

**ME:** Shrub swamp community; Black willow-alder swamp community.

**VT:** Alluvial shrub swamp/woodland ; shrub swamp; buttonbush swamp (*kettle basin shrub swamp*).

**NH:** Shrub swamps.

**NY:** Shrub swamp.

**CT:** Salix nigra/Panicum dichotomiflorum community; Alnus rugosa-Salix spp. Community; Alnus rugosa-Cornus amomum-Ilex verticillata community; Cephalanthus occidentalis-Salix sericea community; Cephalanthus occidentalis/Glyceria canadensis community; Decodon verticillatus shrubland s.

**RI:** Scrub/shrub wetland.

**Golet & Larson, 1974:** Sapling shrub swamp (SS-1); bushy shrub swamp (SS-2); compact shrub swamp (SS-3); aquatic shrub swamp (SS-4).

**Other:** Acidic and circumneutral shrub swamps differentiated by Weatherbee (1992) for Berkshire County.

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